

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for producing a structured composite material having a plurality of apertures for accommodation passage of fluids through the structured composite material, the method comprising the steps of:

forming a first layer having a first shrinkage extent, said first layer comprising a fibrous thermoplastic nonwoven web;

extruding a heat shrinkable second layer onto the first layer, the second layer comprising a thermoplastic film and having a second shrinkage extent different from the first shrinkage extent;

forming the plurality of apertures only through the second layer after extrusion; and

differentially heat shrinking the second layer relative to the first layer to increase a bulk of the composite material and produce the structured composite material;

whereby the apertures are effective in transferring particles into the structured composite material and the first layer is effective in retaining them.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of apertures are formed through the second layer using one of pin embossing, slitting, laser embossing and thermal embossing.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of heating the composite material to effect shrinkage of at least the second layer.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the composite material is heated using one of infrared, hot air, microwave, a cure oven and a through-air-bonder.

7-10. (Cancelled)

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the apertures formed each have a diameter of about 100 microns to about 10,000 microns.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the apertures are formed by producing a plurality of slits through at least the second layer, and opening each slit to form a corresponding aperture.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the slits are formed using expanded metal plates.

14. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the slits are formed in one of a machine direction, a cross machine direction and an angular direction.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the first layer comprises a polypropylene polymer.

17. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the second layer comprises an ethylene-propylene random copolymer.

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein a filler is added to the film.

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20. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the filler is selected from the group consisting of clay, calcium carbonate, diatomaceous earth, titanium dioxide, and talc.

21-41. (Cancelled)

42. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein an initial bulk of the composite material is increased by at least 50% during the shrinkage step.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein an initial bulk of the composite material is increased by at least 100% during the shrinkage step.

44-45. (Cancelled)